

II. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This section follows the FSNE needs assessment outline and organization with sub-section topics revised to apply to outreach. Needs assessment findings summarize information in the following areas:

- **Demographics:** In general, FSP recipients in California are more likely to be children and less likely to be Hispanic than their income eligible counterparts (<130% Federal Poverty Level (FPL)).
- **FSP Participation:** Since 2001, FSP participation has increased in California; a pattern which is also seen nationwide. California's FSP participation most dramatically increased in 2004.
- **Poverty and Food Insecurity:** In recent years, California's poverty rate has been higher than the national rate. In addition, several sources corroborate that food insecurity—the uncertain or limited access to enough food for an active, healthy life—is high and increasing in California.
- **FSP Participation Rate:** USDA estimates are that California's FSP participation rate (the percent of eligible people participating in FSP) dropped from 54 percent in 2000 to 45 percent in 2003. Over 2 million eligible people are not receiving Food Stamp benefits; an increase of half a million in a four-year period.
- **Other Outreach Programs:** In California, all county Food Stamp Programs distribute FSP information, more than two-thirds partnered with other health and human services agencies, schools and/or community based organizations to improve their outreach efforts, and approximately half provided FSP educational materials and/or presentations specifically for noncitizens.
- **Underserved Areas:** County level data on poverty, food insecurity and FSP participation help identify high need counties. More than half of the eligible people not served live in three counties—Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego. Humboldt, Imperial and San Diego have also been identified as priority counties for FSP outreach.

II.1 Needs Assessment Methodology

Topics: Describe and justify your methodology for assessing the food stamp outreach needs of Food Stamp program eligibles in California

The CFSPAIP builds upon available research and information from a variety of sources. The section profiling the FSP in California—recipient demographics, participation trends—draw upon the most recent data available from:

- California Department of Social Services CDSS. Food Stamp Household Characteristics Survey—FFY 2002; and,
- Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) state level FSP participation data.

The food insecurity prevalence and trends section cites data from:

- USDA's annual monitoring of food security carried out by the U. S. Census Bureau—Current Population Survey (CPS) food security surveys, 1999-2004,
- California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) 2003 and 2001, and
- California Women's Health Survey (CWHHS) 1999 and 2004.

The section on FSP participation rates highlights USDA data together with findings from several studies, examining the barriers to FSP participation and a recent report comparing the cost-effectiveness of various FSP outreach strategies. Information about other county- level outreach activities was excerpted from CDSS's Food Stamp Program Operations and Access Report State Fiscal Year 2004/05. Finally, identification of high need counties was based on U. S. Census and CHIS poverty and food insecurity data as well as CDSS FSP program data identifying counties with a relatively high proportion of the state's eligible nonparticipants.

II.2 Needs Assessment Findings

a. Demographic characteristics of Food Stamp Program Participants and Eligibles.

If information is available, discuss geographic location, race/ethnicity, age, gender, family composition, education, and primary language.

Food Stamp Program Participants: In 2005, the FSP's monthly participants averaged 1.97 million of California's 35 million people (CDSS, DFA 256 monthly reports). FSP average monthly 2005 participation by county is found in Attachment #1.

Based on FFY 2002 demographic information, 62 percent—or approximately 1.2 million—of California's Food Stamp recipients are under the age of 16 (CDSS. Food Stamp Household Characteristics Survey—FFY 2002). Of the Californians income eligible for Food Stamps (<130% FPL), only 37 percent are under the age of 18 (2000 U.S. Census).

For those receiving Food Stamps, the average child's age was 8.3 years, and the average age of head of household was 36.6 years. Among the 683,000 Food Stamp households, about 27,000—or 4 percent—were headed by a person over the age of 60, and 80,000—about 12 percent—were headed by a disabled person. The household size averaged 2.7 persons. Fifty percent of households included other persons not receiving Food Stamps, averaging 2.3 additional people. About 50 percent of households received cash assistance in addition to Food Stamps, and just under one-third (32 percent) of households also reported working for salary or wages.

The race/ethnicities of heads of households were Latino (34 percent), Caucasian (30 percent), African American (25 percent) and "Other" (10 percent), principally Vietnamese and other Asian or Pacific Islanders. The ethnicities of the recipients were 46 percent Latino, 21 percent Caucasian, 19 percent African American, and 13 percent were classified as "Other". The heads of household were 76 percent women; non-citizens made up 9 percent of all recipients; and refugees made up 2 percent.

In comparison, the race/ethnicity breakdown of the approximately 6.6 million people in California who are income eligible for FSP (<130% FPL) is as follows: Latino 52 percent, Caucasian 26 percent, 9 percent African American and 13 percent another or two or more races (2000 U.S. Census). For income-eligible households (<130% FPL), 37.6

percent were female headed (no husband present). [In contrast, while 62 percent of California's Food Stamp recipients are under the age of 16].

Although there is no primary language information available specifically for Food Stamp participants, among low-income (<150% FPL) Californians over age 5, over 39% report Spanish and 23% report Asian or Pacific Island language's as their language spoken at home. (2000 U.S. Census)

b. Food Stamp Participation Trends

Nationally, the number of people participating in the Food Stamp Program has increased from 17.2 million in 2000 to 25.7 million people in 2005. According to a recent Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) report, since 2001, the number of FSP recipients has risen

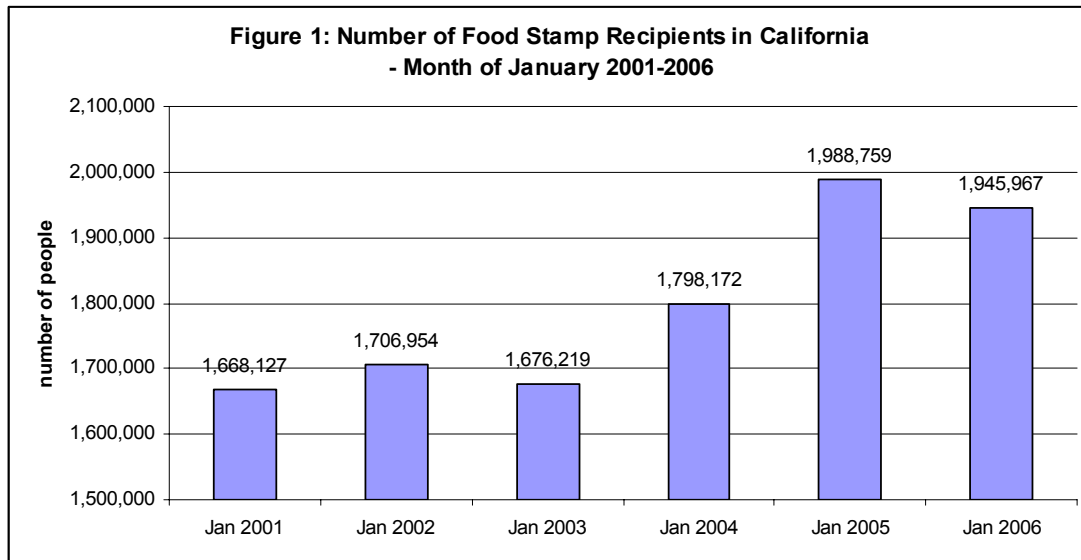
“because of the recession, the continuing increase in poverty, and the weak gains for low-income working families during the recovery. Higher Food Stamp caseloads also reflect the provision of temporary relief to about 4 million victims of last year's hurricanes, as well as modest eligibility expansions and increased participation among eligible households”.¹

In California, the number of FSP recipients has also increased since 2001 and with 320,000 new participants; California reached the goal of 225,000 set in 2001. The most dramatic gains occurred in 2004 and 2005. (See figure 1). This dynamic maybe at least partly explained by a number of important FSP improvements implemented in 2004 (e.g. removing the vehicle rule, reducing the reporting requirement offering transitional Food Stamp benefits for families leaving cash assistance). However, California's recent poverty and food insecurity trends also indicate the need for Food Stamp benefits is likely increasing as has been true for other parts of the country.

In the 11 counties where CAFB sub-contractors have been conducting FSP outreach since CFSAIP's first year through 2005², the change in FSP average monthly participation from 2003 to 2005 was on average 19.8 percent compared to 10.2 percent statewide. The one-year change in average monthly participation from 2004 to 2005 was only 1.5 percent statewide compared to 6.9 percent for these same 11 counties.

¹ Rosenbaum, Dorothy. The Food Stamp Program Is Growing to Meet Need. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. June 6, 2006. <http://www.cbpp.org/6-6-06fa.htm>

² Alameda, Calaveras, Contra Costa, Fresno, Humboldt, Los Angeles, Orange, San Luis Obispo, San Benito, Santa Cruz, Solano



source: Food Research and Action Center

http://www.frac.org/html/federal_food_programs/programs/fsp.html

c. Poverty and Food Insecurity in California

In recent years, California's poverty rate has been higher than the national rate—California's 13.2 percent (2002-2004 three-year average) compared to 12.4 percent (2002-2004 three-year average) for the nation overall.³ Because the federal poverty rate does not allow adjustments for high cost of living regions and has other methodological limitations, many argue that there are far more persons functionally living in poverty than these figures reflect.⁴ A recent Public Policy Institute of California report applies a "conservative adjustment for costs, based on housing rents" and concludes "California has substantially higher poverty than the rest of the nation: 16.1 percent versus 12 percent...only Washington, D.C., and New York have higher poverty than California. Furthermore, Los Angeles, Monterey, and San Francisco counties have poverty rates of about 20 percent—in the range of the ten highest poverty counties in the nation."⁵ Several sources corroborate that food insecurity—the uncertain or limited access to enough food for an active, healthy life—is high and increasing in California.

- An annual USDA survey reported that food insecurity in California households rose from 11.8 percent (three year average for 1999-2001) to 12.4 percent (2002-2004),

³ DeNavas-Walt, C. et. al (2005) Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2004 Current Population Reports US Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/p60-229.pdf>

⁴ Besharov, DJ and Germanis, P. (2004) Reconsidering the Federal Poverty Measure. University of Maryland School of Public Policy. Welfare Reform Academy.

⁵ Reed Deborah. Moving Beyond the Federal Measure. California Counts Population Trends and Profiles. Volume 7 Number 4 • May 2006 Public Policy Institute of California http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/cacounts/CC_506DRCC.pdf

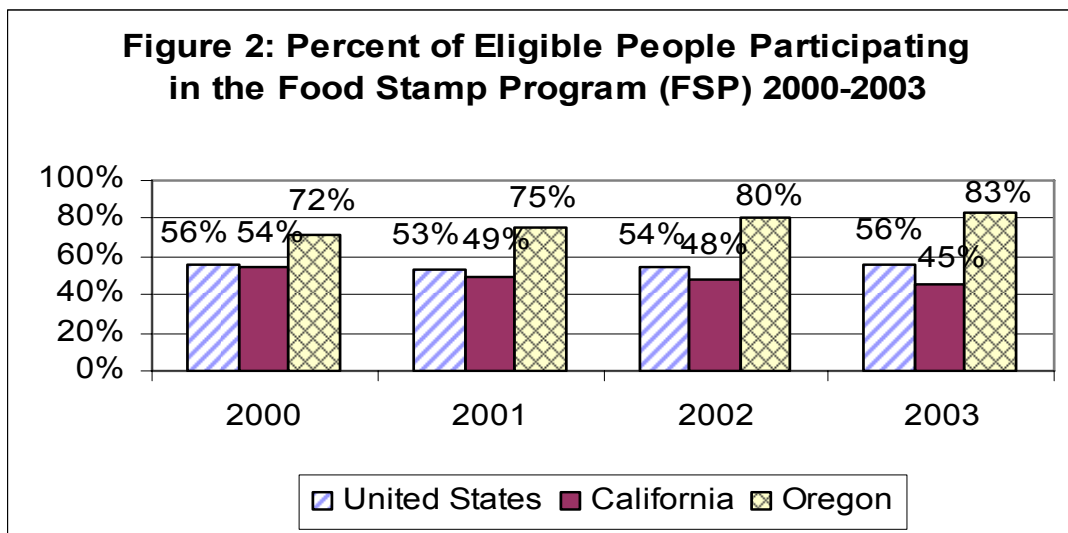
while food in security with hunger increased from 3.3 to 3.9 percent, a significant change.⁶

- Among low-income adults (<200 percent FPL), the 2003 CHIS found a significant increase of almost 5 percentage points in food insecurity- from 29.1 percent in 2001 to 33.9 percent in 2003. An estimated 2.9 million low-income adults were food insecure in 2003 with more than 1 in 10 experiencing episodes of hunger.⁷
- According to the 2000 California Women's Health Survey, food security has been decreasing among California women, from 78.3 percent in 1999 to 73.4 percent in 2004. The decrease was statistically significant.

Food insecurity and poverty trends indicate the likely heightened importance of FSP for ensuring the health and adequate diets of low-income Californians.

d. Food Stamp Participation Rates

According to USDA's most recent figures, California's FSP participation rates (the percent of eligible people participating in FSP) dropped between 2000 and 2003, compared to relatively steady national rates and the 11 percentage point increase in Oregon, 2003's highest performing state (Figure 2)⁸.

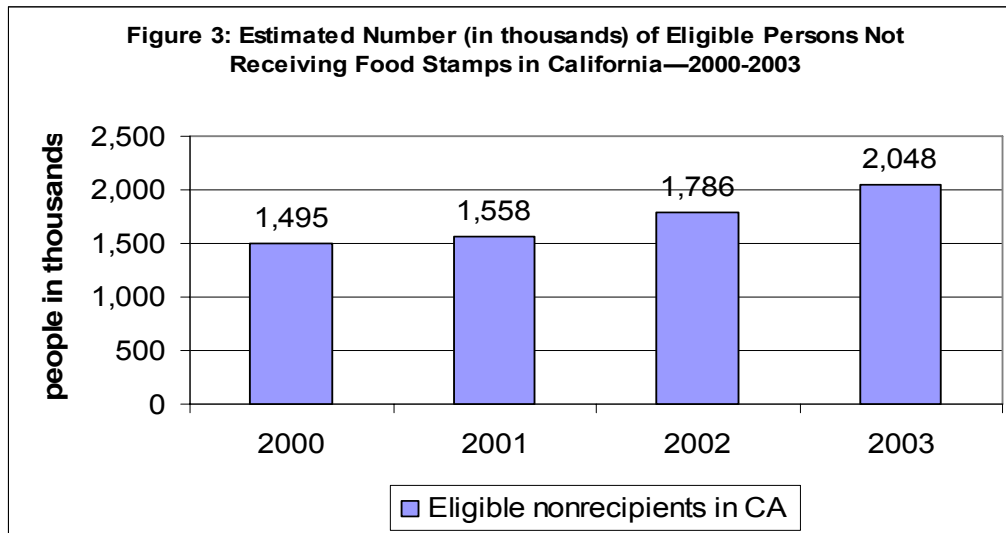


⁶ Nord, M. Andrews, M. and Carlson, S. (2005) Household Food Insecurity in the United States, 2004. USDA Economic Research Service Economic Research Report Number 11.

⁷ Harrison, G, Manalo-LeClair, G, Ramirez, A, Chia YJ, Kurata, J, McGarvey, N and Sharp, M. (2005) More Than 2.9 Million Californians Now Food Insecure One in Three Low-Income, An Increase in Just Two Years UCLA Health Policy Research Brief.

⁸ Source: 2000-2001 rates from Castner and Schirm (Mar 2005) Reaching Those in Need: State Food Stamp Participation Rates in 2002 USDA FNS. 2002 and 2003 rates from Castner and Schirm (Nov 2005) Reaching Those in Need: State Food Stamp Participation Rates in 2003 USDA FNS.

Based on the most recent participation rates, over 2 million eligible people in California are not receiving Food Stamp benefits, which is an estimated increase of half a million people in a four year period (Figure 3).



Understanding why eligible people do not participate in the Food Stamp Program is critical for follow-up action. However, people eligible for Food Stamps are not a homogenous group and a barrier's relative importance will depend on individual circumstances and/or characteristics. National studies show participation rates are especially low among eligible people who are elderly, living above the poverty line, non-citizens, citizen children living with non-citizens and/or working families.⁹ In general, participation rates are linked to the size of the benefit for most groups; however, a sizable proportion of eligible non-participants would qualify for substantial benefit amounts.¹⁰ While there are many factors, three categories of barriers are commonly identified:¹¹⁻¹²

- Lack of information or misinformation about the FSP and FSP eligibility,
- Excessive or arduous Food Stamp Program requirements, and
- Negative stigma.

⁹ Cunnynggham, K. (2005) Food Stamp Program Participation Rates: 2003 Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

¹⁰ Downer, R. (2005) Food Stamp Benefits and Participation Rates within Demographic Groups. Alexandria, VA: Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/PUBLISHED/FSP/FILES/Participation/PartRatesDemographic.pdf>

¹¹ Juárez and Associates and Chávez Regino (2002) Perceptions of the Food Stamp Program Among Limited Household Income Residents of California: Results from Focus Groups California Department of Health Services.

¹² MkNelly, B. (2005) Reaching the Other Eligible Californians: California Association of Food Banks' (CAFB) Food Stamp Outreach Project. CPNS, CDHS.

¹³ Bartlett, S, and Burstein, N, (2004). Abt Associates Inc Food Stamp Program Access Study Eligible Nonparticipants. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Cambridge, MA. <http://www.abtassociates.com/reports/efan03013-2.pdf>

FSP outreach is principally focused on this first barrier with some potential to possibly reduce “negative stigma” through media or other promotional efforts. A recent report examined the cost-effectiveness of three types of FSP outreach strategies:¹⁴

- Prescreening for eligibility and application assistance at a variety of community sites outside of the regular county FSP office;
- Outstationing county FSP eligibility workers to community sites; and
- Media.

The report concluded that “large scale [community-based] networks ultimately make the most significant changes in Food Stamp enrollment because they help promulgate best practices while avoiding duplication of efforts within a given community” and that while media “does not make application easier for an individual, the media campaign analyzed in this report was correlated to the largest gains in approved applications per cost than any other method”. For California, a precursor to any large-scale FSP media campaign is establishment of statewide information (FSP telephone number and/or website) that would be operable across all of California’s counties.

e. Other Outreach Programs Serving Low-Income Persons in California.

Discuss the availability of other outreach-related programs and campaigns.

The CDSS Food Stamp Program Operations and Access Report State Fiscal Year 2004/2005 provides the most recent summary information of counties’ outreach activities. Excerpts from the report released December, 2005 are provided below:

- “Twenty-two counties maintained an FSP hotline telephone number that provided general FSP information. Of these 22 counties, three indicated their hotline also included information about non-citizen eligibility, and five indicated their hotline provided information pertaining to outreach activities.
- Seven counties (10.9 percent of statewide FSP households) utilized local media public service announcements to provide general FSP information. This is a decrease from last year when 12 counties, representing 30.9 percent of statewide FSP households, provided general FSP information via local media. Of these seven counties, five also included information about non-citizen eligibility.
- The two most frequently utilized FSP outreach activities were providing informational brochures/flyers and participating in community events such as health/job information fairs.
- All 58 counties utilized various sites/methods for distributing material and/or conducting presentations about the FSP in general. Community based organizations, community events, and one-stop centers were the most frequently utilized sites/methods.
- Thirteen counties provided FSP educational materials and/or conducted presentations specifically for migrant workers. The most frequently utilized sites/organizations were community-based organizations, community events, and migrant camps.

¹⁴ Adamus, Brigit (2006) The Outreach Aisle: A Showcase of Cost-Effectiveness in Food Stamp Outreach. The Congressional Hunger Center, San Francisco Department of Human Services, Food and Nutrition Service – USDA.

- Twenty-four counties provided FSP educational materials and/or presentations specifically for non-citizens. Community-based organizations, food banks, and community events were most frequently utilized.
- To improve FSP outreach efforts, 39 counties partnered with other Health and Human Services agencies, schools and community based organizations.
- Twenty-three counties implemented new FSP outreach activities during SFY 2004/2005. The majority of the activities were ongoing, rather than one-time only.
- Twenty-two counties indicated plans to implement FSP outreach activities during SFY 2005/2006. The majority of the anticipated activities are ongoing rather than one-time only.”

f. Areas of California where Food Stamp Program eligibles are underserved or have not had access to FSP outreach previously

In addition to the county-level outreach activities described above, CAFB has outreach sub-contractors operating in 24 counties as of CFSPAIP’s FFY06 mid-year amendment (see Attachment #1 counties with an asterisk). County-level poverty, food insecurity and FSP participation information helps to identify counties where outreach activities might be expanded or prioritized (see Attachment #1).

For example, of the five counties with the highest overall rates of poverty, and specifically poverty among children, CFSPAIP sub-contractors are currently operating in only two (Fresno and Imperial) but not in Del Norte, Madera and Tulare. Of the five counties with the highest rates of food insecurity among adults, three are participating (Fresno, Imperial, Merced) but two are not (Kern and Tulare).

Attachment #1 also provides county-level Program Access Index (PAI) estimates. PAI is a poverty-based USDA-FNS program performance indicator that is more readily calculated than USDA's FSP participation rate.¹⁵ The PAI is a measure of the average number of FSP participants in FFY2005 as ratio of number of individuals below poverty excluding individuals below poverty receiving SSI. CFSPAIP sub-contractors are only lacking in two (Marin and Mono) of the five counties with the lowest PAI. While the relatively poor performance for these two counties is noteworthy, they are both relatively small with on average only 4,261 and 271 FSP participants, respectively. Based on the FFY2005 FSP participant figures and the PAI, county level estimates of the number of FSP eligible persons not served were made. These absolute figures are only rough estimates since eligibility factors such as immigration status and asset ownership are not factored into the index. Still, it is useful to identify counties having the greatest proportion of estimated eligible people not served in the state. From this perspective, the high need counties for FSP outreach are Los Angeles (38 percent of the state’s eligibles not served), Orange (8.4 percent), and San Diego (8.9 percent). These three counties are home to 55 percent of the eligible non-participants. Two counties are especially notable. While Orange and San Diego counties are respectively home to 4.1 and 4.3 percent of California’s FSP participants, almost twice as many of the state’s eligible non-

¹⁵ USDA's method is applied to the county level with one exception - Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) figures were not factored into the index as they are not available on a county basis.

participants live in these two counties— 8.4 percent in Orange and 8.9 percent in San Diego Counties.

Humboldt, Imperial and San Diego have also been selected as priority counties based on the need for capacity building for the three CAFB subcontractors operating in those counties as well as the needs of nonparticipating households. Imperial County has the highest child poverty rate in California and a food bank with very strong, bilingual-bicultural Food Stamp outreach staff and activities with very little current funding. Humboldt ranks high both in terms of overall and child poverty; currently, the CFSPAIP sub-contractor is the only community based organization from which the county will currently accept FSP applications. Finally, as described above, San Diego is a high need county.

As described in subsequent sections of the plan, CAFB has established a network of CFSPAIP sub-contractors to amplify FSP outreach activities in this county.